

Pittsburg State University

Pittsburg State University Digital Commons

William Aaron Brandenburg Collection
Documents

University Archives

2016-12-01

Paper about Dr. William Aaron Brandenburg.

K. Bernardin

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/brandenburg_history

Recommended Citation

Bernardin, K., "Paper about Dr. William Aaron Brandenburg." (2016). *William Aaron Brandenburg Collection Documents*. 1.

https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/brandenburg_history/1

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the University Archives at Pittsburg State University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in William Aaron Brandenburg Collection Documents by an authorized administrator of Pittsburg State University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact mmccune@pittstate.edu, jmauk@pittstate.edu.

For my paper I have chosen to write about Dr. William Aaron
the
Brandenburg and first seventeen years of his presidency of Kansas
State College, which covered the years of 1913 to 1930.

Kansas State College was principally a manual training school
prior to 1913. Kansas Manual Training School, as it was then named,
was founded from an idea and thru Mr. R.S. Russ's effort for manual
training and household arts in the public school of Pittsburg. Dr.
G.E. Myers, who succeeded Mr. Russ as principal, was principal of the
largest manual training high school in the country, and was hired to
develop the manual training curriculum. However, an academic indepen-
dence movement was growing in Hays and Pittsburg to free them as branches
of Emporia, and while this movement was defeated in 1911, resulting in
Dr. Myers being hired as principal, its victory in 1913 let the newly
created Board of Administration go outside the state to choose a man
free of the controversy to head the school. The man chosen was the
superintendent of the Oklahoma City public school, Dr. Brandenburg.¹

Dr. Brandenburg, who believed that a manual training program
was essential to a young man's life and wanted to maintain the program,
also believed in the academic independence movement and devoted his
talents to transform the Kansas Manual Training School into an accredited
college.

In June of 1914 Russ Hall, one of the only two buildings of S.M.T.N.,
was destroyed by fire and the policy of that day was that no insurance

¹Twenty-Fifth Anniversary, K.S.T.C., 1928, K.S.T.C.

was carried. The following afternoon Dr. Brandenburg spoke at an assembly, and was instrumental in adopting a pledge of \$100,000 from the citizens of Pittsburg to continue the operation of the school, until the state legislature could reimburse them. This ended the threat of the school to leave the city.²

Next, I'll list the accomplishments of Dr. Brandenburg in two major categories, the creation of buildings on campus, and the expansion, and founding, of departments of the college.

List of college buildings and the year completed:²

Russ Hall, 1908; rebuilt, 1914-15
Geology Building, 1917
Science Hall, 1919
Auditorium (annex to Science Hall), 1919
Cafeteria, 1920
Gymnasium, 1921
Willard Hall, 1923
Brandenburg Field Stadium, 1924
Home Management House, 1926
Porter Library, 1927
Horace Mann, 1928
Mechanic Arts, first story, 1919; completed 1928
Music Hall, 1929

Most of these departments were held in two or three rooms in Russ Hall, and the instructors were usually of the same number.

These are the departments which President Brandenburg expanded:

Art	History and Social Science
Biological Science	Home Economics
Commerce and Business Administration	Industrial and Vocational Education
Education	Mathematics
Library	Music
English Language and Literature	Physical Education for Women
Foreign Languages	Physical Education for Men
Geography	

²Ibid.

³Two Decades in the Presidency, KSTC, 1933, KSTC Press, Anniversary Committee.

The following departments are those which President Brandenburg founded:⁴

Speech
Physical Science

Psychology and Philosophy

"Prexy," as Dr. Brandenburg was affectionately called, had a philosophy of teaching which was that there was one thing more important than teaching, and that was those people who molded a good teacher.

Now that we have seen some of the problems and circumstances he faced, and his accomplishments, we must try to find out how he actually transformed his goals into reality. To try to show this more clearly, I have chosen three sentences from a paragraph in which a teacher of the college, Miss Edalia E. Roseberry, eulogizes Dr. Brandenburg. The title is "He Lifted Skylines of Their Horizons."

One of his expressions of democracy was in believing that a janitor was as important as a Dean. His goals were never stationary, as he approached them, his breadth of vision pushed them beyond his reach....He overcame obstacles either by surmounting them, passing through them or going around them.⁵

An extraordinary quality of this man was his concern for the faculty, and, especially, the students. Receptions were held for the faculty and their wives at the President's home every fall, spring and summer semester.⁶ Graduating classes and summer school classes were also given receptions at the President's home.⁷

⁴Collegio, March 18, 1938.

⁵Collegio, November 15, 1940.

⁶Scrapbook, as found in, May 1927 to August 1928.

⁷Scrapbook, as found in, May 1927 to August 1928.

And on the occasion of President Brandenburg's 25th anniversary of his presidency, Santa Maria Craig wrote in her congratulatory letter that her reaction was "a feeling of happy security that our president was close to us,"⁸ in an address which Dr. Brandenburg made in September, 1924, stating "Any concern big enough to worry you is big enough to have my attention. Feel free to talk it over with me." And, according to Miss Belle Provorse, the president's private secretary, a student did not need an appointment or did he have to see anyone prior to seeing the president. The student would just go to the president's office, make his intention known, and the president's door would be open to him.

The second statement of Miss Roseberry's eulogy can be examined in three phases. These phases are how much Dr. Brandenburg pushed his faculty, why he was so successful with the state legislature, and how many other organizations he was active in.

Two foremost examples stand out as to how Dr. Brandenburg probed and guided his faculty. The first is that, although I could not find written records to document this fact, it is well known that Dr. Brandenburg influenced the faculty to provide manual labor by themselves for the construction of the football stadium. Secondly, President Brandenburg appointed Dr. Yates in 1915 to head the correspondence school, whereby faculty members, without reimbursement of their own time and money would travel to cities throughout this state and Missouri ^{on weekends} to conduct classes for students who could not do "day work."⁹

President Brandenburg's success with the state legislature is seen in that every dollar that came from the legislature must have been

⁸ Santa Maria Craig to Dr. Brandenburg, Porter Library, Brandenburg, W.A., Silver Anniversary, Letters and Cards of Congratulations, Kansas State College of Pittsburg.

⁹ Kanza, 1938.

appropriated by that body. The Biennial Appropriation, from 1913 to 1933, was from \$220,500 to \$720,368.¹⁰

How Dr. Brandenburg accomplished this is seen in two examples. Former Governor Arthur Capper said to a friend once of Dr. Brandenburg that he "liked that man Brandenburg because he always seems to have a program, knows where he wants to go, and travels in that direction."¹¹

Fred Brinkerhoff, in his eulogy "Prexy" in the Pittsburg Headlight, commented on how President Brandenburg worked with the state legislature.

...He had a habit of knowing his subject completely when he appeared before a legislative committee. At Topeka he was not bothersome to legislators....He did not make himself obnoxious around the legislative halls. When he arrived in Topeka on a particular mission, he remained at his hotel until he was called before the committee. As a result of this sort of thing, legislators hunted him up and wanted to visit with him.¹²

His position in the community would dictate that he must participate in some organizations, but Dr. Brandenburg's career in community affairs is almost staggering. The highlights were, I believe, twenty years as a director of the Pittsburg Chamber of Commerce; for many years he was in charge of the 17th degree of Scottish Rite Masonry, and in 1928, potentate of Mirza Shrine in Pittsburg.¹³

If one would look at his career closely, it can be seen that he was assuming greater responsibility here also because he was a leading spirit of the American Association of Teachers Colleges from its beginning, and he was president of this association at his death.¹⁴

¹⁰Two Decades in the Presidency, KSTC, 1933, Anniversary Committee, KSTC Press.

¹¹Kanza, 1938.

¹²Pittsburg Headlight, October 30, 1940.

¹³Collegio, March 18, 1938.

¹⁴Collegio, November 15, 1940.

Dr. Brandenburg was an eloquent speaker, and as Miss Provorse has pointed out he could not decline an invitation to speak, whether it was at a national ^{education} convention or a small town high school graduation exercise. Eventually, these extra activities which he did not decline, even though in advancing age, became an impairment to his health.

President Brandenburg's technique for overcoming obstacles is, I believe, a classic. This is from the eulogy of the editor of the Pittsburg Headlight Fred Brinkerhoff, who was an associate and a close friend of President Brandenburg for 25 years.

...seldom lost his temper and never lost control of himself. Facing trying problems, he met them with a determination that matched his ability and with a superb calmness. He was never carried away either by his own enthusiasm or by the enthusiasm of others. He acted with deliberation but without delay. But he retained modesty and humility throughout his career that endeared him to his associates.... Executive ability of a high order. Diplomatic, in administering his office, he was definite in his decisions. There never was any doubt about his appreciation of his responsibilities.... He never permitted those who found fault to swerve him from the course he had set for himself and for his institution.¹⁵

We have seen some of the qualities which President Brandenburg possessed and used to perform his job so well. And still there are several gifts and qualities which are foremost about the man which must be known if we are to understand him. Two great gifts, which were given him, were a high intelligence and the ability for leadership. The quality without which no man can even hope to achieve anything worthwhile, and which Dr. Brandenburg certainly possessed, is courage. Two qualities which

¹⁵Pittsburg Headlight, October 30, 1940.

Dr. Brandenburg exemplified, and he acquired in his early life on the frontier, were industry and perserverance.

His enemies were opposed to him not only because of his programs and policies, but also because of the extraordinary quality of Dr. Brandenburg's individuality, which encompassed his learning, judgment, enthusiasm, ability, ambition and his accomplishments.

If we make an attempt to find the personal man in Dr. Brandenburg, we will see that he had one other great love besides this college institution, and that was his family. Dr. and Mrs. Brandenburg had six children, and Mrs. Brandenburg helped her husband not only in the entertainment field but in kindness and friendliness in opening up her home to all his associates and to the students. One has to read the letters of congratulations of his 25th anniversary of his presidency to see how often she is asked about and complimented.¹⁶

President Brandenburg could not win every cause in which he fought for, but, I believe, his biggest disappointment was the death of his son Merrill in an auto accident near Taft, California, in 1938.

¹⁶Letters of Cards and Congratulation, Porter Library, Brandenburg, W.A., Silver Anniversary, Kansas State College of Pittsburg.

Now, in closing, is a good time to let the man speak through his own writings. I've chosen two paragraphs from his address to the Master's Class of 1940. This speech is more remarkable because it was made when he was combatting his last illness, and he had to spend several days prior in bed in order to be able to give it. And viewed in retrospect to the dark days of 1940 when it was written, it is prophetic.

"And so, my dear young people, filled with a larger measure of your own ambition as evidenced by your further preparation, you will go out to begin, and to carry on that life career,—a career all important to each of you, but important also to society as well. You will go forth to continue your work in a world the like of which civilization has really never before beheld. More momentous issues, greater uncertainties, more discouraging and confusing conditions will confront you in such numbers and such proportions as to challenge every ounce of the best of yourselves. As you depart from us, I trust we can think of you always as the true prophet, the seer. As such you must expect great futures for those with whom you work. You may be sadly disappointed, and the product of your desires may be so far below your expectations that you will feel at times like quitting but you must go forward. Remember, each child, each youth that comes to you will expect everything you can do for him as the Great Teacher you will not disappoint him. As an artist, what privilege is yours! Each individual may be to you a piece of canvas, color,

and stencil, and out of your imagination, with the skilled hand of the artist you will trace the product of human glory and grandeur representing the future life rounding out, often disappointing you, but frequently revealing a more glorious vision to you than you had thought possible.

"And so you will, each of you, build the very best with the material which is given you, and what you build will be more enduring than brick or stone for you will build human honor, integrity, sincerity, square dealing, and all that goes to round out a life fit for a civilization of finer friends than we are seeing manifest in many places today."¹⁷

¹⁷The Alumnian, Fall 1940, KSTC.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Alumnian, Fall 1940, KSTC.

Collegio, March 18, 1938.

Collegio, November 15, 1940.

Kanza, 1938.

Letters of Cards and Congratulation, Porter Library, Brandenburg, W.A.,
Silver Anniversary, Kansas State College of Pittsburg.

Pittsburg Headlight, October 30, 1940.

Santa Maria Craig to Dr. Brandenburg, Porter Library, Brandenburg, W.A.,
Silver Anniversary, Letters and Cards of Congratulations, Kansas
State College of Pittsburg.

Scrapbook, as found in, May 1927 to August 1928.

Twenty-fifth Anniversary, KSTC, 1928, KSTC.

Two Decades in the Presidency, KSTC, 1933, KSTC Press, Anniversary
Committee.